

## Farfar's Marks its 20th Anniversary

By PAULA MAXWELL

It will be free ice cream cones 'all around' tonight and a celebration of good taste as Farfar's marks its 20th anniversary with little fanfare and a plenty of good eating.

And taste is what it's all about as far as owner Andra Carleton is concerned.

"We're one of the few ice cream shops left in the state which still makes our own ice cream on site," said Andra. "We use the recipes my dad tested and developed. We think we spend a lot of time getting it right."

Over the past two decades, the now famous shop bearing the Danish name "Farfar" meaning, "grandfather," has become as popular a local landmark as any. In fact, a record 2,000 people made their way to the counter on the single busiest day, Sunday, May 30th of this past Memorial Day weekend.

Farfar's has earned its institution status in town with a reputation for quality and good service. A visit to the shop is a virtual rite of passage, where many patrons have tasted their first ice cream cone, celebrated after a game,



Far Fars owner Andra Carleton has been a familiar face behind the counter for many years.

*Photo by Paula Maxwell*

brought a first date, treated visiting company, or saved it for a favorite drive destination.

A 20- year steady stream of customers makes Farfar's one of the most successful businesses on the South Shore with the million ice cream cone mark in sight before next millennium.

Andra said her father, the late Walter Simonsen, was known as an ice cream guru in the food industry. Besides launching his daughter and son-in law in the ice cream business, the H.P Hood food consultant worked with most of the independent and chain

operated shops in New England. It was his expertise and direction which helped young entrepreneurs including Steve Herrell who started the first Steve's Ice Cream shop chain in Cambridge. Most of the ice cream franchises including Friendly's got started with help from Simonsen she said.

"He knew the ice cream business inside out," said Andra. "He would advise people about such things as cones, recipe flavors, equipment and store layout and generally help them get started."

But it was his formula for the first frozen yogurt that was perhaps his greatest claim to fame. Andra said he was working for H.P.Hood in Charlestown at the time so the patented formula was not his own. Today his "discovery" has evolved into a whole new target market. Farfar's carries his original frozen yogurt recipe along with the many other popular ice cream flavors he devised. Some, like his Danish sweetcream have been incorporated into the country's ice cream culture under a variety of other names but



Counter staff Cammie Mac Cardell-Fossel, Andra, Kate Cook and Laurie Driscoll.

*Photo by Deni Johnson*

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unmistakeable to Andra who says she will always identify it as her father's own.

Growing up in Wakefield, Andra said ice cream was always a big part of her world as it was for her sister and brother. She has fond memories of tagging along with their father to New England ice cream shops and getting treats along the way.

When she and husband, Steve, decided to launch their own shop in the Millbrook area the local zoning board of appeals in the late 70's was not receptive to the plans.

He recalled that their original encounter with the Board of Appeals was met with skepticism and pretty much doom and gloom. "I distinctly recall members of the board saying, 'this is not the kind of thing we want to see in Duxbury'. It was like we were bringing 'Trouble right here in River City.'

"But I remember John Spence from the Rockland Trust giving us great encouragement saying our preliminary projections for business were too low in his opinion."

Though the ice cream industry has seen a lot of changes over the years with wild flavors and multiple additions, Andra said vanilla continues to be the local favorite. Close behind are oreo cookie, chocolate, and a more recent fourth place finisher, chocolate chip cookie dough.

"We're not a dairy so we buy the base, a very fine quality with 14 percent butterfat. To it we add top quality flavors such as real bananas, cantaloupe, peppermint candies, grape-nuts, and other top quality ingredients," said Andra.

Farfar's is open nine months a year employing 25 people in the summer. Hundreds of local girls have scooped ice cream behind the counter over the years including multiple family members. Nearly 100 college banners hang from the ceiling

as mementos of past counter help and Farfar's alums.

Ice cream making has traditionally been handled by young Duxbury teenage boys trained by Jason Carleton, now 32, who still pitches in to make ice cream flavors he's mastered when not working as a partner with his father in Millbrook Woodworking.

The process requires patience, prep time and experience. Jason explained he makes five gallons at a time mixing ingredients at the right time to get the proper consistency. The ice cream is poured into 21/2 gallon containers and then hardened for 12 hours. From that point they are placed in tempering chests for another 10 hours to bring the ice cream to scooping temperature. Some mixing "mistakes" over the years have led to some interesting ice cream combinations. Hardest to make is peanut butter and oreo cookie is time consuming, he said.

Jason recalled that his popularity in town grew by leaps and bounds when as a eighth grader his parents opened an ice cream shop.

Among his favorite memories over the years was a frantic call from the counter to shut down the loose whip cream hose which wildly flailed and covered everything and everyone in sight until it could be shut off.

Steve recalled a frantic five days without electricity in the 80's when Hurricane Bob hit in August and all the ice cream was lost.

For a few years in the 80's the Carletons helped launch other 'Farfar' shops which peaked at 21 including stores in Plymouth, Cape Elizabeth, ME and Seattle, WA.

Steve said the family wasn't interested in classic "franchising".

"What we did was help them get started. Parties would pay us for the training, recipes and consultation and then they

were basically on their own to hopefully do a good job if they were to carry the name," he said.

Many of the businesses were started by friends and relatives. Today only the original Farfar's and one in Isaqua, WA. still operate under the name.

Besides classic cones,—lime rickeys, sundaes, cream freezes, ice cream sodas, frappes, and floats continue to be popular.

Andra said she has learned to interpret all sorts of ice cream lingo throughout the years with variations on orders depending on the customer's part of the country.

"We have frappes, milk

shakes and cabinets which could all be the same thing. We have jimmies, sprinkles or shots on cones. We hear calls for bowls, dishes or tubs. Some people come in and order egg creams, but we don't do those," she said. "Regular" cones to customers can be wafer, waffle, or sugar depending on their childhood memories.

"And of course we always allow one 'dropsy' to avoid tears when accidents occur."

The shop is patterned after a barn and displays lots of antiques and mementos. Loads of photographs of satisfied customers adorn the walls along with copies of the many "best of ..." articles which the store has earned through the years.

One interesting *Boston Globe* article on Farfar's carries the banner headline, "Thriller in Vanilla".

The Carletons take pride in their role as a responsible business supporting local fundraising efforts and sponsoring the annual July 4th road race. As their business celebrates 20 years, the Carletons agree their fondest memories are of the many former staff and customers who are part of the character of the place they love.

"It's great to see regular customers come back with their kids and grandkids," said Andra. "It's been a lot of hard work and a lot of rewards. I wouldn't trade it for anything."